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"I will be what I will to be."

THE IDEA OF GOD.

A LECTURE DELIVERED BEFORE THE SOCIETY FOR ESOTERIC CULTURE, OF BOSTON,

*7608.105

ON THE

Evening of Jan. 19, 1887,

BY

HIRAM E. BUTLER,

OF PHILADELPHIA, PA.

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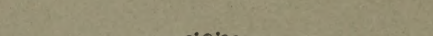

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THE IDEA OF GOD.

THE subject selected for the lecture of this evening is the Idea of God. All religions and all systems of occult science, from the earliest history of the world to the present time, have been characterized entirely by that ideal of God which has been held by the people with whom these systems originated.

The word *God* in all languages of the world, with perchance the exception of the English, has carried with it the idea of power. In the Hebrew language, for instance, we find, as the expression of the idea, the word *El* or *Eloheim*, which embodies and expresses the idea of power or almighty creative power; and in all the languages and religions of the world the word selected for the expression of a people's conception of a Supreme Being had for its principal signification the idea of power, — a power that was over and above all, and that was not only power in itself, but the cause and source from whence all manifestations of power emanated.

When scientists search for the prime cause of creative energy, they commence by examining the methods of nature. They observe the growing vegetation, they

see the molecules of matter gathered together by the forces of the great mother earth; with the aid of the microscope they trace the formation of these molecules from a stage where atoms are too minute to be discerned, even by the magnifying lens, and arrive at the conclusion, that, from all that is revealed, the process of building matter into form is invariably the same, and that beyond the molecules and atoms that can be discerned there are myriads that are imperceptible, and whose existence can be affirmed only by the unanswerable argument of analogy and logic. The creative force they have thus far been unable to discover, but the result of a creative force is fully manifest, — an interior power that builds and demonstrates, and from which orderly and harmonious structures arise, emblems of an interior and invisible order and harmony, be its source what it may, yet ever orderly and expressive of method and intelligence in its creative manifestations.

The materialistic scientist has usually arrived at the conclusion that matter has in itself the requisite potency to build orderly structures, beyond which he cannot go, and thus is empty of adequate or satisfactory solution of the great problem of life.

In our effort to present to your minds our ideal of God, we shall endeavor to enable you to conceive of a Supreme Being who has attributes much broader and greater than has heretofore been generally accepted. We do this because we believe that in order to attain to the knowledge of grand truths and states of unfoldment one's conception of a great, all-pervading divine essence must embrace the grandest and most ennobling ideal of which human nature is capable. It is only

necessary to look into the history of the world to see how closely the character of the nations has been moulded by their ideals of God. The nations which have believed in one or many gods — gods whose principal endowments were those of the worst attributes of human nature; who were vindictive, jealous, constantly warring with each other or with their subjects — modelled their lives in conformity with their belief, justifying their desire for revenge and domination by force, — the strong oppressing the weak by the power of their own might, — thus honoring and imitating the overbearing, unsympathetic ideal gods of their imagination. Thus we find in all history that according to their ideal of God such has been the character of the people.

Man is of necessity a religious being. The idea of a God has possessed all nations and classes. A people so low down in the scale of unfoldment, who have not had an idea of God — calling it "The Great Spirit," as did the American Indians, or by some other significant name — has never yet been found. Why this should be would be a difficult question to answer, were it not that at the foundation of all being there is a something oftentimes vague and indefinite, but that nevertheless gives a consciousness of an infinite, an over-power, upon which man in his necessities may rely, unto which he may pray or offer sacrifice, propitiate by destroying his enemies, or anger by neglect or scorn of its power.

Scientists tell us that we cannot understand or even think of anything of which we have not some correspondent within ourselves. Thus far we bear them company; but when they state that we can know nothing but that of which the five senses take cognizance, we

take issue, for this is far from true. When we speak of cause, which of the material senses perceives or comprehends it? Not one of them can do it! They cannot perceive the commonest principle in nature, which is force! To what does such a materialistic assumption lead? Let us consider. You may feel the weight of the stone that falls upon your hand or person, but do you feel the impelling force? No! Gravity was there before and after the fall of the stone, but you were unconscious of its presence; but when this power takes possession of the inanimate stone and brings it down upon your person, you feel the result of the action, but that which caused the stone to fall you cannot feel. You may see the train of cars whirling along, but that subtle something that has been brought into play by the expansive action of heat, producing the energy which so forcibly propels them, you cannot see: it is beyond the scope of the five senses. Thus you may go over the entire catalogue of moving forms, and you will find that the material senses cannot take cognizance of anything that belongs to cause. This makes it necessary that we should reason from the facts of our observation and experience, and accept the deductions logically resultant therefrom as the obvious truth. Philosophy began, and has expanded, with the effort to determine what is life; and to-night the same problem is before us for consideration, and we still ask, What is life? We see the manifestations of life in the animal world; we observe it in the vegetable domain; we find that even the earth, the rocks, and every existing thing is filled with life, and that all are constantly undergoing change through the unceasing effort of this

something we call life. If we endeavor to look beyond this realm of matter, how much can we see? what can we thus learn of life through the agency of the five senses? We turn and investigate the human body; this is the starting-point of the ancient philosophers. They began with the body, and sought inward and upward for the *cause*, unlike the modern scientist who, commencing with man, traces down and out until he is lost in the intricacies of nature. Let us in our investigations return to the methods of the ancient philosophers, beginning with the highest attribute of man, — the will.

It is by the power of will that we are enabled to move a hand. If a more powerful will takes control of ours, — psychologize us, as we say, — it can prevent us from moving even that, notwithstanding our own will may desire so to do. We know that we cannot move a muscle without the consent of the will. We talk about the involuntary action of the system, but such action is nothing more or less than the movement by the will in accordance with an established habit of being. Every possible action of our organization may, by the effort of our own will, be suspended; and investigation has proved that there are those who are capable of suspending every action or function of the system, even bringing the involuntary activities under control of the will. Thus habit, being induced through the operation either of one's own will or of that of the parent organism, may again be dominated by the same agency. Continued practice causes the hand of the mechanic or musician to act in as regular and systematic manner as do any of the apparently involuntary muscles. I have

seen men execute the most intricate mechanical work, that which required the utmost nicety and exercise of fine artistic sense, such as could be attained only by long and untiring application, without any apparent thought or attention. Therefore, we see that the will not only establishes but corrects and controls habits, and is the dominant power and ruler of all.

In our search after God it becomes necessary to look within and beyond. We therefore proceed in accordance with this law in our analysis of the highest form of earthly organization; namely, man. When we have ascertained what man actually is, we begin to form a rational, in fact the highest possible, conception of how and from whence he originated. Let us turn our attention to the old cabalistic name *Yahveh*, which I have chosen to place on this chart (see diagram) as representing the cause of the seven creative principles, which we shall discuss in subsequent lectures. This (pointing to the chart) is the Hebrew word *Yahveh*. It occurs over sixty-four hundred times in the Hebrew Bible. It is translated, I think, in our version but four times, in three of which it is rendered as Jehovah, and in the fourth as Jah or Yah; and you will notice in the English translation of the Scriptures, that wherever the name of the Deity is used, when derived from *Yahveh*, it is invariably spelled with capital letters. This word *Yahveh*, the cabalistic name for GOD, means, "I WILL BE WHAT I WILL TO BE." You will see that this expresses supreme ability and indomitable potency. Who among the sons of men dare step forward and say, "I will be what I will to be"? Think of it! not merely implying, but asserting, that the ability to be whatever

he wills to be exists in himself. Here we have a foundation thought, and here I will say, that in this "I WILL BE WHAT I WILL TO BE" we find the key to the whole Hebraic Scripture.

Now let us look and see what a subtle power the will is. We will, and we move; or the will may be excited, and we say that we are angry; and when the will is excited to anger, what a storm exists in the body! how the red blood mounts to the face! every nerve is strained to its utmost tension! what an abnormal strength is called into being to resist and overcome obstacles! And thus even the weakest organizations are by this power of the aroused will enabled to assert and maintain their right (or possibly wrong) at all hazard. Thus you see that the will is the absolute monarch, ruling every muscle and nerve, governing every thought; and that every other power in man is subservient to this king, THE WILL.

Let us look still further, and turn our attention to this planet, earth. It is relatively but a little ball revolving around the sun, its great centre of light. It has eight companions, — yes, more; there is a large family of worlds, each revolving around the same centre, each following in its own prescribed orbit. Here we must become conscious that there is a great power that causes these worlds to revolve around their common centre, each travelling in its defined orbit; and then we find that our centre, the sun, is but a planet of a greater and grander system, and is, with its family of worlds, revolving around another sun; and further still, that this third sun and *its* family of worlds, is travelling around another sun of a still greater and grander

system, so great and grand that it is supposed by some that to complete one revolution consumes over twenty-two and a half million of our years. Here the telescopic deductions of man now cease. But do mathematics cease here? We think not. There are mathematical methods by which it can be proven that all these worlds are born from a great central sun; and that as they are farther and farther removed from it, they become finer and more ethereal, are more fully developed by the same law of transmutation and change that we observe in our planet, the earth; which earth is but an immense electric machine, generating currents of electricity and magnetism which bind it to its sun. The material elements are being transmuted to finer essences of being, and in these worlds born from the central sun we find that they are getting finer and less physically strong in their currents; therefore they are drifting farther away from their centre. If we will investigate our planet, the earth, we shall find that it is becoming finer and less strong physically; that every generation of its inhabitants is becoming more refined than its predecessor. Look back for a few generations, and see what a different character they bore from the people of to-day; how much weaker are we in muscle, how much stronger in brain; how much greater flights of thought are being taken to-day than in years long ago. Thus thought and mental power are gaining, while physical energy is decreasing.

Thought is the co-worker of the will; it is not the will, but is submissive to its power: we think, and consequently act. But there are powers that can overcome the mandates of *our* will: for instance, let us take

electricity. Suppose you take hold of the poles of a strong electric battery, put your will to work and say you *will* hold it; let a strong current of electricity be turned on, and where is the will? The arms are drawn up, the muscles are contracted, and the will has no power whatever over them. Here is a power that acts like the will, but is much stronger. It is the solid and grosser materials of the decomposing elements of nature, potent with the Divine will, that are throwing off and emitting a current that is stronger than the will of man, and will dominate it in spite of his greatest exertion; if but the necessary mechanism and material is supplied. From the fundamental idea, then, that these worlds are born, grow, unfold, become more and more spiritual, — or, if you should choose a perhaps better word, more mental, — they become more like the Author Mind, the physical energies decrease, they drift farther away from their centre, as their mentality becomes developed so as to enable them to support their existence at a greater distance from the parent sun; and the farther they are removed from their centre of light, the more luminous they become of themselves. As we go farther on, we observe, and shall try to show, that there is no difference between life and light. Taking this as an analogy, then, our earth must of necessity be destined at some far-away period of time to become a central sun, luminous with life and light, from which worlds will be born. It has thus far had but one child born from it, — our moon. The greater planets have greater numbers of worlds born to them, and at some far-away period of the future they will each form a great system, filling their allotted sphere.

We can only discern material substance and things that are like ourselves. As these worlds of which we have spoken become finer, more ethereal, more independent of their sun, they become suns themselves. Changing our line of thought, let us trace from our earth to its central sun, which sun being but a planet, itself revolving around another sun, its centre, — this centre revolving around another sun, its centre, — yet visible, and supposed to be a star in the constellation Pleiades, and we find that we can logically go still farther; but for the material eye to see, the telescope and other appliances for aiding its vision are not yet adequate. We find that we may go on and on, and that each sun, as we come nearer the great centre, is finer and more ethereal. It has been asserted that there is a fourth *dimension* of matter; something more than length, breadth, and thickness; something that is interior to what we have been considering. As we go on tracing these worlds, finding them to be finer and yet finer, we mathematically conclude that this planet of ours may, at this very moment, be sweeping the interior organization of a far grander world than any of which we have formed the slightest conception, and whose people are refined to such an extent that they have no more consciousness of our existence than we have of theirs. So from mathematical conclusions we may trace until we can conceive the thought that all which we call space is peopled with worlds and systems of worlds, interior to other worlds and systems of worlds, until there shall be no such thing as space; and that in this which we call space we could, were our eyesight sufficiently refined to take cognizance of

all the conditions of matter, perceive millions and millions of worlds, interior to still other worlds, all interpervaded by one Great Essence of Being, which, for lack of better terms, we call God, spirit, soul, or life. We are bewildered when we seek to locate cause, and when thus going out in thought into the breadth and vastness of creation we can see that we may logically conclude that this which we call space is so densely filled and inhabited, and not only inhabited, but interinhabited, that it is not space, but is occupied by existing and orderly moving worlds. We can also see that all these systems are governed by a definite law of order. Order pervades everything. Not a plant can grow, not an organic life exist, except by the law of order. We need never expect a machine to be made to do our work except it have form and order. It takes mind to make a machine, and to so construct it agreeably to the law of order that it will perform the work which we design it shall do. If a man should bring to us, perchance, the delicate machinery of a watch, and say, "This grew of itself," could we believe it? Could we possibly believe that the existence of such machinery happened by chance? that the pieces of metallic substance fell down from somewhere, and by some jostling came together in this perfect order? No! nothing could convince us, or any other number of thinking men and women, but what there was a mind, an intelligent and reasoning power, that caused every part to be made, put in its place, and arranged in its order. When we look out upon our world and see how it, and everything in and upon it, is in the most perfect order, can we think that it was formed without intelligence? — much

less when we look into our solar system and see its multitude of worlds, each revolving around a common centre, all held in perfect order, all working with the exactness of unparalleled machinery which surpasses the possibilities of the conception of the human mind, can we for a moment think that there is not a mind behind it? that there is not a will that controls it? Certainly not. Now we must pause in the presence of this great, almost unknowable machinery of nature, working in perfect harmony, without inharmonious action in any part.

It has been stated by astronomers that if it were possible for one world to be out of time for a moment, that all systems would be thrown into chaos, so perfect is the law of order in nature. Now there must be a mind and will that is holding everything in its place. There is a thought that has built everything. There is a will that controls all, and that will is like the will which governs the machinery of our bodies. When we get further on in this course of lectures, we will show you that there are reasons for believing that not only is there an intelligent cause, but that this intelligent cause has actually the form of man. The old philosopher and astronomer who gave to us the picture we have in the common almanac of to-day — of the man with the twelve zodiacal signs around him — had a reason for it; and we will show you further that Swedenborg, although considered a dreamer and visionary, agreed exactly with all the visions and prophecies of antiquity; that the planet earth and its inhabitants were all members of one great body, one grand man. These facts are arrived at from the annual revolution

of our planet through the four quarters of its ecliptic. These four quarters being again divided into twelve parts, give to us an insight to all the mystic symbols of our Bible, wherein we find the twelve sons of Jacob, the twelve apostles of the Lamb, and the twelve which are so constantly referred to in all the prophecies. These twelve divisions of the ecliptic through which the earth passes, if you will observe them, take for commencement the sign Aries. This sign has reference to the head and power of the reason. The earth enters into this sign of the zodiac on the twenty-first of March. Now if you will take the trouble to examine into the characters of persons who were born when the earth was in this sign, say for one month dating from the twenty-first of March, you will find that they are all persons who demand a reason for everything, are ready to give their own reason for all they bring forward, and are generally inclined to support their reasons in a somewhat logical manner. By thus comparing the character of persons with the indications belonging to each of the twelve signs, you will find that character may be more fully delineated than by any system of phrenology; for these twelve departments of the zodiac actually contain the twelve principles that form the twelve different functions of man, and their centre is the will, which controls the grand man. (This subject is fully treated in my work on "Solar Biology.") We then conclude that the God of the solar system, the power which controls life within the limits of that system, is in the form of man, and works through the grand functions of the solar man. The same evidence teaches us that we may carry the idea of man into the

ecliptic through which our sun travels in its revolutions around its centre, and so we may go on eternally and still find the form of man interior to all created suns and worlds, tracing this divine principle yet more and more interior, until the mind is lost in its inquiries into the mystery of what this God-man is. I tell you, friends, that the same law of logic holds good in considering individual man; and when we have solved the question, "What is man?" we have also solved the problem, "What is God?" Man himself has possibilities of godly attributes and powers greater than any that has yet entered into the conceptions of human thought, superior to any that has had being or form on this planet. But what does this bring us to? To this conclusion: that that which we call God, the creator and cause of all things, could, as Swedenborg truly says, "create but from himself."

In our bodies we are limited in creative work to the powers within ourselves. Generation and creation may be used as synonymous terms, for all things have come into existence by generation, formed of the parts and particles of the parent organism. If we trace this to the infinite and unknowable man whom we call God, the great universal man who is the life of all things that exist, where do we come? We reach the conclusion that all that we call matter is only another state of existence of the same Being or Cause. When we have an idea of a spiritual and unseen being that we call God, we, with the ancient cabalists, formulate an idea of a place or state of perfect white light, which light is the source of all fire, but of a fire that is creative, gives life, but destroys nothing. Whatever our idea

may be, let us expand it once and for all to this: that the gross matter upon which we walk is but the concentration of the Infinite Spirit. Matter itself is only a condition of spirit, and as that condition changes, it becomes invisible to our perception; and so we may go on, on, eternally on, from state to state interior and yet more interior. What we call solids to-day may to-morrow be changed into gases, pass out of sight. We may call it ether, spirit, mind, or what we will; for the fact that there is nothing known in the universe that cannot be turned into gases and thrown off into what we call space, and no longer have form, measurement, or weight, is in itself evidence that as into this it can be turned, from it it must have come. Then what shall we think of God? What is God? God is everything, is everywhere; fills all space; fills all things; is the life and intelligence of all things; is the motive power of all things. "But," you may say, "you are destroying entirely the ideal we have been worshipping under the name of God." No, no! not at all! For, as we have already said, this idea of God brings you back to the idea of your own being. For you are of God, and God is within you; all that you are, all that you can be, all that you may attain to, is of God; and without the God within you, the essence of the Great Soul of the universe, which animates and inspires you, what would you be? The physical shell, which is the house that contains this great vivifying and all-enlightening spirit, is but a clod of senseless matter, which must soon be resolved into the elements from whence it came.

To enlarge upon this theme: the entire mass of humanity are but parts of one grand whole; each member

is but an emanation from the great universal mind, and it takes the whole to make the one great body; and you and I, and our earth, and all that is within it, are members of this one body; hence we cannot injure a single member without injuring the whole body. Therefore, there is true logic in the idea of the Orient of to-day, when they express the thought that "all life is precious, therefore kill nothing"; because if you kill anything, it must of necessity react upon yourself, for all that exists on this planet is part of your body, part of the great God who rules this body, a part of your mind, and your mind a part of it. Again, all there is in the whole planetary system is a part of this one mind, this controller of all; and so on, from system to system, up to the Infinite itself, it takes all to constitute one grand unit.

Where, then, shall we look for the Highest? In the individual, the will is the supreme monarch: we cannot move a muscle without it so ordains. Has it form? No! we should define it rather as *function*. It has an organ, and that organ has form. Is it anything of form that causes me to move my arm? No! There is a centre of power — call it either if you choose. My hand moves quicker than thought: will has done it; the action produces thought. Has this thought form? Yes; thought has form called into existence by the mandate of the will formulated from the essence of the body. Each of you, my friends, are a thought-form of the solar mind, through which the God of this universe operates. A thought-form, an expression? Yes, a word of God. How truly John expressed this when he said, "in the beginning was the Logos," — the word; and

the word was God, or power; and all things were made by it, or him: when the thought was formed, a world was born, and in that world was the essence of being that brought us here. You and I stand, a thought of that Infinite. Is that all? If we find that all that we call space is filled and interfilled with that which we call God, then what? We do not weaken our conception of God, but we are inevitably brought back to our Hebraic Bible, which states that God is everywhere present, and knows the heart and thoughts of every living soul. Yes; he knows! he thinks! If this were not so, how could you think and know? From whence did you receive the higher attributes that we call love? We love our wives and our children, and are willing to labor to uphold and maintain those dear ones. We derived these attributes from the fountain of all good, and yet we are a condition of matter; and although part of a great whole, are bound here and insphered within certain limits. But a mind has projected you into being, and that mind is everywhere. Man is a being of love, and there is nothing that can live without it: love is a magnet; it draws to, and embodies in itself, the object of its love. Without love, the grass could not grow, not a flower spring forth, not an animal organization could exist: no, it has formed all things; and therefore the wise man said, "God is love." Love is power. When we refer to the ancient Cabala, and to the Hebraic Bible, we read that after a panoramic view of the whole order of creation, God said that all that he had made was very good; therefore we are right in attributing everything that is good to Love, for God is Love, and Love is power. There is nothing in nature

but what is good; and when we call anything evil, it is because it opposes us. Now that mind of which you are the expression, of which everything that is, is an expression, by which all worlds were formed, is everywhere; and all the attributes possessed by human nature are everywhere. Take a thimble and hold it up; what does it contain? Atmospheric air. What more? Why, it contains enough of that infinite thought-potency to make a world, give it sufficient time. It contains so much of the infinite power that if you should breathe a desire, thought, or prayer to it, it would become a servant to your desire. Then pray always. Remember this: that this divine love, this divine thought, this divine wisdom, this infinite knowledge and infinite power, this will which holds in its right hand all these worlds, causing them to wheel around their centres, each in its appropriate orbit, — desires, yea, seeks, to serve you, but it cannot act other than in accordance with its nature; therefore conform to its nature, and it will be your servant. Remember, I repeat that this will which pervades everything is in you, and that it is Love; therefore strive to fulfil the commandments so forcibly expressed by the Nazarene, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind . . . and thy neighbor as thyself."

Who is my neighbor? Every living thing, my fellow-man, even the reptile crawling at my feet, — all are a part of me, a part of my flesh, a part of my being; for I am a part of the grand man, and everything which is below me are but embryonic conditions of me, which will in time become man, taking my place. Then let us follow the commandment, and love God and our neigh-

bor as it directs: then we shall find practical the idea of the Bagavad Gita, to arise and go up into some quiet, secluded spot, and think on me, even me, Om (the Sanscrit word for Omnipotent), and you shall find such meditation to be good for your soul.

Where shall we find the God of our ideal? In the quiet room, or lonely spot on the mountain top, or by the surging sea; wherever the mind can sit in calm meditation, and go out in this wonderful thought of the Infinite, tracing and following it wherever the imagination may lead, feeling certain that we cannot go astray; for it is God we seek, and God is infinite life and love and thought, infinite wisdom, power, and everything of which we can form any conception. When you know how to take hold upon yourself by the power of your own superior will, and then begin to think about that God, begin to imitate and try to be like him, and endeavor to bring your body and all its parts to the utmost perfection; begin to unfold, to think, to know, to will, to be, — then you commence to be like that Infinite; then the limits around you will begin to expand, the boundaries of the will will become wider and broader, and soon you will find that there are possibilities within you and within all that are so far beyond anything we have heretofore conceived, that we might imagine a man who possessed such power was the god of the universe.

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